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Not much to say, plans were to do a separate Mailing comments only catch up newsletter, but I felt that a report to BMF2011 members was a higher priority. Instead there should be a Mailings comment centrefold section with this issue. During July I have been under siege from the Flu for the best part of two weeks, slows me down a bit.

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Our Community values?

Thursday May 18 - A day of outrages!

One, Bananas have gone up overnight, were \$8.90, now \$10.90 for the same small B grade greenish Bananas.

Two, I discovered that the Peppertree Café is now a 'Bacon Free' kitchen, i. e. don't even think of going and asking for a bacon and egg roll in the morning, they've gone halal! Last week at the Bankstown TAFE cafeteria I asked for the 'Bacon Roll' as advertised on the sign pinned up on the wall behind the counter and in response the serving person just wandered away to serve someone else, coming back to say 'No'.

Three, I went looking out at lunch time for cottontails, for my Mother. I discovered that the local K Mart only had on display size 12, 22 and 24 ones, (Schoolgirl, Pacific Islander Small and Medium) not the size 16 that I needed bringing home. Had to seek the advice of the shop ladies as to whether this was a case of limited range or a change of size numbers. Had to get 16s from the Town Hall branch of Woolworths, where they manage their stock better I guess.

Four, I Looked into getting some new pyjamas. I discover that they put the size XXXL ones on the shelf closest to the floor, i.e. the one place where the gravitationally challenged will have difficulty in reaching.

Five, finally, to cheer myself up I bought a copy of the Fortean Times. I still had my Source Code movie ticket in my hat band, so the girl behind the counter says, 'You've got a piece of paper on your hat', I reply, 'No, I've got tickets on myself!' To absolutely no reaction, as this comment went completely over her head!

In other News, Bankstown Railway Station has it's own '**Hitler Cat**', a cat with markings so loved by internet sites. That is to say it's a cat with a white face an abbreviated dark 'moustache' colour patch under it's nose. It also has a two dark fur colour patches on it's head. With a bit of imagination these patches resemble the Hitler style hair parting and comb over forelock.

May 2011, A Rather Busy Months end

May 19, Infinitas SF&F Book Review meeting, May 20, Sydney Futurian meeting, May 21, Kipling Society (afternoon) and Aurealis awards night, May 22, Democrats (all day), May 24, Canterbury and District Historical Society, May 25, Sapphos Second hand bookshop SF&F discussion. 21, T

Saturday May 21, as I was out of Micardis, I experienced prolonged periods of lack of mental clarity and a lack of ability to apply myself to tasks, that was to last for 30 minutes after taking a pill. I.e. under this mental regime I'm unable to make SF 'work in my head' if you know what I mean. My immediate priority was to 'pill up' ahead of the afternoon's note taking. However I was distracted, I bought four books at Clemton Park (given my condition at the time, a bit of Light Non-SF reading, **N. A Silberman's** 'The Hidden Scrolls, Christianity, Judaism and the war for the Dead Sea Scrolls'). Took the bus to Campsie where I bought the pills. Caught

the bus to Burwood where I bought one book (**Bob Shaw's** 'Two Timers') and a mini freezer block (for Futurian nights?). Caught the express train to East Roseville, wandered around East Roseville before the Kipling meeting, left at it's conclusion, took the train to North Sydney, the bus up to the Stanton Library and the Independent Theatre. Soaked up some local impressions, noticed the changes since when I used to work at Airstores North Sydney (1982 to 1986) and do the North Sydney Market. I had planned to spend an hour or so writing up notes at Stanton library, waiting to the Aurealis event punters to arrive, but they close the library at 5 pm on Saturdays, another reason why there are no more North Sydney Freecons! Noticing them setting up, from the other side of the street, where they were organising the reception area ahead of the Aurealis Awards night, I handed over the BMF flyers to Chris Barnes, and set off for home via a bus, a train and a bus, arriving home ~ 7 pm.

Sunday May 22, caught the 423 into town, to Newtown Station, walked to Erskineville Station (encountered a two metre high pop art 'Spock' portrait on the way) and the Rose of Australia Pub for an Australian Democrat meeting. **Observations** – Erskineville is attempting to become the new Newtown, still some 'old Australians' visible around and about, so it's still more of a poorer person's version of Glebe, but without the sense of community offered by a weekend Market. The pub no longer stocks 'Sheaf Stout', Thus I conclude that the 'old Australians' (working class / housing commission / renters etc.) are no longer economically important in the area. Also, the dogs! Lots of them out and about at midday etc. I think I can say that the dogs of same sex couples look so

much better than the other dog walker's companion animals, which means ... dunno. This day was 'bookended' in a highly unattractive manner. Trip in and trip home I met the same bloke on the bus. This guy is huge, too big for belted trousers so he wears Cricket gear and elastic waisted tracky dacks. When he gets up to leave the bus you always get 'moonied' as the tracky dacks only come three quarters up when he changes from sitting to walking. The sight is a discouraging start to the day, but the anticipation of what you will see as the bus approaches his stop. Thus my journey this day was 'bookended' by this experience. Home at about 4 pm.

Basenjjs Weight Watch Project

A project of weight loss in the Eulabah Avenue Basenjjs community continues.

Date	Amber	Rusty
27 Feb	15.25 kg	17.25 kg
17 April	13.83 kg	16.50 kg
11May	13.50 kg	16.50 kg
16 May	13.25 kg	16.25 kg
Aim?	12 kg	13.5 kg
Ideal*	9 to 11 kg	10 to 12 kg

*per breed standard for Basenjjs Dogs and Bitches (show dogs/supermodel weights rather than for middle-aged suburban mutts?)

When initially added to our household Amber and Rusty both seemed to be slightly larger than average Basenjjs, and the fact that show dogs are quite visibly 'lean' allows me to add the margin to the 'aim' weight. Currently both Amber and Rusty are visibly reduced in size from how they appeared at the end of 2010 / the beginning of 2011. They were so well padded that they couldn't reach their own tails to scratch or bite at flies etc.

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Canterbury and District Historical Society meeting of Tuesday May 24, 2011, Empire Day, (Queen Victoria's Birthday)

Arrived at the hall at about 7 pm, hardly anyone there, just setting up etc. It promised to be a cold and windy night, a complete contrast to my last visit, attendance about twenty people (seven Men), meeting Demographic very much like the RKSA. Prior to the formal start of the meeting there was a great deal of chit chat between members, a community getting up to date with what had happened to members present (and absent) since last meeting. With conversations mentioning recent public affairs, illnesses,

connections through scouting, Freemasonry etc. I offered \$2, received one \$1 raffle ticket. I was touched to see some of the senior members of this association struggling with their infirmities to still be able to contribute to the running of this meeting, some rather more impaired than my Mother?. Inevitably, at these times, my mind turns to P.D. James and her 'Children of Men'.

The formal meeting started at 7.30, fifteen minutes delayed from it's advertised starting time of 7.15. Part of the reason for the delay being that a key committee member was overseas, requiring some doubling up of front table duties and officers reports. A Treasurer's report on the state of the Association's finances revealed what I expected for most long existing associations, a significant balance of cash and investments from prior years, possibly cash rich, membership poor?

A great deal of 'Business In/Out' consisted of listing the Historical Periodicals received and commercial offers made to the association. The major point of discussion being the matter of insurance, an essential expense or any public group, a \$500 cost per year, speculation whether the Association would qualify for a lower rate next year due to membership numbers. Other matters discussed included the range of historical materials that the group has for sale, an issue of transferring oral history resources onto a digital format, That the Manchester Unity group will be holding a 'Last Tram Ride in Sydney' slide night to raise funds for Canterbury Hospital, the monthly Beulah Vista open day (first Saturday of the month).

Resources recently added to the Association's collection include;

A 1939 Gregories Street Directory (on Disc)
A List of NSW Hospitals, circa 1911
An early Sydney Postal Directory

**Speaker; Jack Thompson
Topic; His recollections of
Active service with the 2nd/3rd
Pioneers Battalion of the 9th
division of the AIF during
WW2**

The Guest Speaker was able to start at 8.10, and proved to be someone I have seen from time to time at the Clemton Park bus stop.

Jack Thompson, now 91 years of age, signed up with the AIF in 1939, partly because work was still hard to find in the years immediately after the depression. At that time he did put his age up to get in, as during 1939 the age of enlistment was 21, as opposed to 18 during 1940. Although he was both a 'Desert Rat' and a 'Darwin Defender' he declines to be considered a 'Hero', instead he likes to think of himself to be 'one of thousands', who answered the call and did their bit 1939 to 1945. He joined the 2nd/3rd pioneer battalion of the AIF's Ninth division as an anti tank gunner. This battalion consisted of 1100 men due to the attachment of a a pioneer company, larger than the usual 800. The usual task of a pioneer unit being engineering tasks, such as road / bridge / landing field work, but in a fight they also served as infantry. The Pioneers were to win a VC at Tarakan, and this wasn't for road building!

His progress through the war was to Cowra, the Darwin, leaving before the beginning of the Japanese bombing raids on Northern Australia, then overseas to North Africa on the Queen Mary in convoy with the Queen Elizabeth 2 via Trincomalee Harbour, Sri Lanka. Jack related some of the 'housekeeping' statistics of these luxury liners turned troop

carriers, such a mile of sausages served each breakfast and tonnes of Beef for tea! He believes that the ninth Division was fortunate in that they always went into battle well trained. Up against the Rommel and the Afrika Corps however, he believes that their armaments and mobility were usually inferior. He quoted the instance of the German's 88 mm gun, suitable for Anti-Aircraft, anti-armour and anti-personnel, the allies had to bring along three different guns for these tasks. Rommel was reported to be highly complementary of the Ninth division's soldiering, claiming that if he had them on his side the North African War would have been so much shorter, but Jack is of the view that if the Ninth had the Germans weapons it would have been much shorter still! Another example of the Germans better 'kit' is that he recalls first encountering plastic during the war, as the German's communication cables were sealed in plastic rather than the cloth, rubber and varnish of the allies. He took part in the 15 day siege of El Alamein and has strong memories of 800 big guns firing at once. Many of his unit were from the country, one who was captured and put to work on a German farm as a POW says he was disappointed that the war ended so soon, as he was 'imprisoned' for the duration on a farm otherwise only run by lonely women! Generally speaking, during the Desert War capture was survivable, unlike in the Pacific campaigns. After North Africa he returned to Australia for Jungle fighting training at the Atherton Tablelands and he took part in the Island hopping campaign against the Japanese. The fighting was less intense than in the Desert, but health issues resulted in higher casualty figures, Jack ended the war at Moorebank, recovering from Malaria and other effects of the war.

After the War

Jack is the President of the Bexley North Branch RSL Branch, and frequently visits schools to speak. On these occasions the RSL supplies you with a set of informative speakers' notes prior to the Anzac day or Armistice Day engagement, usually for student and teacher levels of comprehension. On one occasion recently, when he was due to speak at **Clemton Park Public School**, he was about to speak from his set of notes, but he glanced down and saw that the student who was to speak immediately after him – had the same notes! – so he had to adlib that one.

At other times Jack is a singer, he has been so since he was 12. He currently sings occasionally at Nursing homes and the like, as he says that at 91 the trouble is not being able to sing, but being able to find an audience prepared to listen to his singing.

Questions and issues arising

Did you ever fight against the Vichy French?

Answer – No not really, doesn't have anything against them, regretted that the Vichy French sinking two of their own ships in Alexandria Harbour, ships that would have been quite useful to the allied war effort if handed over intact.

Jack related a tale of a conversation between a column of the Ninth AIF coming into a North African town as column of French Civilians were leaving the town, possibly a renewal of family ties commenced during WW1?

Jack has vivid memories of having started his schooling at Bexley North Public school, one of the first children to be enrolled, and being looked after by the other children at the school.

Another WW2 story that emerged subsequent to Jack's talk was of an audience member's uncle, whose detachment two days after the VJ day were still under attack from Japanese forces. They were down to their last rounds and about to breaking out bayonets when the Japanese finally ran up the white flag, they had no such shortage of ammunition.

In conclusion – Jack considers himself fortunate to still be alive, as one of thousands who served and believes that Wars do ordinary people no good at all.

Notes from the May 21, 2011 meeting of the Rudyard Kipling Society of Australia, Lord St. Uniting Church Hall, Roseville East

Around and about - No Micardis pills left this morning, so I really wasn't very well organised, had to put out the washing, measure out the dog food (for the week) and sort out various papers for today and tomorrow's meetings. I cooked up some Rice for Amber and Rusty but I couldn't organise myself do any of these tasks in one go, from beginning to end. I was constantly breaking off to do a bit of this and a bit of that, instead of completing each in turn. Mother off to get her hair done. The priority of the remaining day must be to get pillled up prior to the RKSA meeting (or else what's the point of going?). At Clemton Park shops a moment's curiosity about books on sale at the Antiques shop resulted in buying an Encyclopaedia on Ireland, the History of MI6, Errors in Star Trek Next Generation and a book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, all \$2 each. Bus to Burwood where I discovered that St Vinneys now has a new back room for

electrical. Several VCRs on sale \$40 each, file for future reference. Fortunate to catch a ten past 1 express train, got me to Roseville in 30 minutes!

Impressions of Roseville east – A Garden Cafe full of Women, all ages, ranging from their teens to their 80s. The young ladies encountered on the train and near the station are wearing extremely short shorts this month.

Met a Aust / Asian couple out for a walk, with three boys already, one in the pram and a baby bump visible, are we trying for a basketball team (five boys) or a girl?

Noticed a lost and Found sign in a shop window 'Has anyone seen ...' not a lost cat or dog but a straying pair of bagpipes! People shouldn't go out with their bagpipes unless they are on a leash.

Entered the hall at ~2 pm, found the committee seated around a card table doing last minute committee stuff, conversed with the guest speaker, noticed more blokes present at the meeting than usual, possibly something to do with the topic, RK and Scouting

RKSA Business etc.

Philip Peak, the Guest speaker introduced, family connections to committee members discussed, Accounts / Finances discussed, skyrocketing surpluses and general soundness likely to attract the attention of Peachy et al. (The Man Who Would Be King reference)

The Way Through the Wood was read and discussed, a short ish poem of two near sonnets, which was published in "Rewards and Fairies" as one of the between story poems, to introduce or set the mood for the following story. The theme ostensibly is about nostalgia for a closed or 'lost' road. But there is a bit more to it than that, something happened to close the road,

there is ghostly imagery that might relate to the incident, there is a mysterious 'keeper', a grounds keeper, or a keeper of the memory of the road, it's significance or of what gave rise to the ghostly apparition? Three levels present in the poem.

The Decorative Arts council will be presenting talks on Rudyard Kipling in Rajasthan on September 8, 2011 at Paddington RSL, \$20 to get in. RK as the son of the Principal of Bombay's Art School consequently had a great deal of exposure to Art and Design in his formative years.

The Guest Speaker Speaks.

Philip provided us with a great deal of biographical material, basically to explain that he was deeply in and out of scouting at various times during his life and that of his family. His talk could be subtitled 'Twenty Years in Shorts and a Woggle'? He was raised locally, but apologises for not having read a great deal of Kipling, but he had been exposed to a fair amount of the Jungle books due to his scouting experiences, as a cub and as a leader.

Cubs came about because Baden-Powell's ideas for scouting as a training plan for the over 11s did attract a number of under 11 year old boys who were included on an ad hoc basis, but it soon became clear that something different would be needed for them. Baden Powell approached Kipling, who he had known in India (Lahore 1882 to 1884), directly to ask if he could make use of Jungle book themes. At the time Kipling had had a reputation for being very protective about the use of his books characters, but on this occasion, Kipling said 'yes' and was to have a lifelong involvement with the scouting movement. So from this the Jungle Book and 'Jungle Lore' came to be a 'New Testament to the scouting movement.

Elements of this include that cubs (were)

more correctly 'Wolf Cubs', pack names were available, not just for leaders, each of which reflected traits and roles such as Lawgiver, Observer, bushcraft instructor. The Grand Howl, a licensed form of youthful exuberance, with Challenge and Response Dyb Dyb Dyb (Do Your Best) and Dob Dob Dob (we'll Do Our Best) etc. being an essential feature of the cub/scouting culture. This was a feature enthusiastically enjoyed by the kids, and scary to newcomers and nearby residents. The book 'Now You Are A Cub' explains all this.

A system of proficiency awards, camp shirt badges and cap stars recognises progress towards 'enlightenment' and character development, i.e. one star = one eye open, second stars = two eyes open. The Highest award being the 'Leaping Wolf' badge. Australian scouting 'naturalised' some aspects of this, with Bronze, Silver and Gold Boomerangs replacing stars. The central line of Cub / Scouting remains consideration of others and self restraint. Cubs are now 'Cub Scouts' and more streamlined to being junior Scouts. The overly English scratchy woollen 'jerseys' for cubs are long gone in favour of more scout like uniforms. They also now let Girls join the Scouts, rather than reserving the opportunities only for boys?

Getting the Message across?

Cub leaders have a number of ways of getting aspects of the Jungle Wisdom across, including a number of games that can be played.

Some of the Jungle Book ideas were purged / fell out of common usage during the 1960s / 1970s as being 'old hat', but most were kept and a realization has grown that the 'spiritual' side of the Jungle book stories is necessary for an

understanding of key scouting values, such as Kindness to others / obedience / love of nature, so some of it has been put back.

Scouting's Future?

Broadly speaking, nationally numbers are stable, the future prospects for scouting depend greatly on where you are. It's growing in some areas and declining in others. Scouting faces time challenges, for Cubs, Scouts and leaders. A Shortage of leaders is limiting it's growth in some areas. There are still more boys than Girls in most Scout troops (with some notable exceptions).

Scouting has not only been influenced by Rudyard Kipling's writing, but Scouting has had an influence back on his writing, such as the appearance of Scouts in a story, 'The Horse Marines'. Kipling became a commissioner of scouting in 1923 although it is reported that he never wore the uniform.

Multicultural Scouting?

There are a number of scout groups sponsored by minority culture / language groups, so Scouting in Australia is no longer purely an Anglo Celtic experience. (I asked a question about how Islamic scouts got on with the involvement of possibly 'haram' animals in the Jungle Books values?

A range of Cub and Cub Leader instructional Literature was displayed.

Philip is looking for a copy of a book called 'Mallory's Sons' by **Hugh Brognan** which contains Scouting references.

Incidentals – Rudyard Kipling is in fact named after a manmade lake in the UK Midlands, where his parents first met. Most people encountering this feature think it is the other way around! This lake was

created as a reservoir for nearby potteries and barge canals. Currently it's in the middle of countryside, but at one time it was quite the place for couples to 'promenade' (i.e. to show off and hook up)

Among the Viceroy of India's 600 household staff, the lowest entry position was that of the Mongoose Boy, who was summoned (with mongoose) when snakes were encountered.

A 'Synod' of Cub leaders is referred to as a '**Seoni gathering**', from the Jungle book. Philip was scheduled to speak at a previous meeting, but he has 'mending fences', that is he had volunteered to assist **Blazeaid** which was helping the victims of Queensland flooding to re-erect or renovate the pushed over or swept away boundary fencing. He found the experience satisfying and enjoyable.

David Watts offered a rare example of an error in a Scouting related Kipling story about a boy who could do nothing properly, but was able to be a 'true scout' by being taught how to cook on behalf of his troop mates by a tramp, i.e, a case of bacon before eggs.

I made a pointed suggestion about the 'qualification' aspect of scouting, proficiency badges and a verifiable record of extracurricular community based involvement etc. I'm surprised that it doesn't show up at Selective School applications, as 'community involved' team players would have to be preferred over self interested achievers? If it was a recognised advantage, could boost the movement?

NB I believe that the term 'Scout' has changed greatly over time. Originally it meant servant, as in the 'Scout' position at long established English Colleges. The

term was modified by American usage, American Explorers engaged Native American servants, to do their 'scouting' for them, interpreting the land and the people encountered on expeditions etc. and from this the 'Indian Scout' or 'Scout' as a field craft expert arose. If Baden Powell's attention had been directed towards the Australian experience of 'Black Trackers' perhaps we could had a worldwide 'Tracker Movement' instead.

Garry's notes from the April 21, 2011 Infinitas Book Review meeting

Books discussed were; Mars Bound by Joe Haldeman – SF and The Cardinals Blades by Pierre Pevel - Fantasy

Present were; **April, Anthony, Beth, Garry, Geoff, Julie-Anne, Len, Mark, Michael, Tim and Brian Walls (but where was Amanda?)**

Mars Bound by Joe Haldeman

A curiously formatted book, remarked on by several who read it. Seems to be made up of dissimilar sections, as if parts of it were written for different markets / book formats. I.e. the first section was very similar in style to a **Robert Heinlein** juvenile (Podkayne of Mars). It seemed to be a throwback to 1970s style SF, which was enjoyable, and then the Aliens arrived and the book changes in style and content to something like a **Greg Egan** novel. The thing about these Aliens is that they are engineered to learn all they can about Earth, they are not

in any way curious about their elsewhere creator race. These Aliens don't want to destroy us, but as a result of their investigations they may have to. The Aliens part of the book includes a lot of office politics, dealing with the issue of how to deal with the Alien's arrival. The book provides a reason for SETI's failure, as sensible aliens know to keep shtum!

Other comments mentioned a **Kim Stanley Robinson** like Mars Colonisation. Discussion of the series, for indeed this is only book one of three, it is possible that we are looking at three books, each in three sections, each eventually telling the same story from three perspectives to create a whole? Possibly, getting into space, getting to settle Mars, then the Aliens arrive and it might be a matter of human survival, or the point of view characters start as teenagers, become young adults then finally as Adults, progression of the story together with character growth. Very readable, not much Science or the storyline overpowered by the explanation of the Science, Science used as incidental props. Formulaic, but not in a bad way? A check list of Tropes to tick off was mentioned. YA in style but does include mention of sex. It features Space, Mars, Aliens and Military SF.

Final word on this book – An enjoyable but not absolutely compelling book, six read the book, about half will progress to read the succeeding books of the series. There are some books that you don't get immediately, but you read on expecting that the separate narrative strands will meet in the end and that the 'pay off' will make it all worthwhile. Clearly this book did not sustain this level of endurance.

The Cardinals Blades by Pierre

Pevel (translated from French!) - Fantasy

It's set in 1633, an alternate history fantasy about three Musketeers with Dragons! All size and shape Dragons, messenger pigeons to flying battle mounts, and even a group of people who are descended from some Dragon / Human sex! Well written, fast paced and fun. The action encountered has the feel of a Movie script or Anime. It features one map of Paris, which was very useful. Shape changing human Dragon hybrids have a place in human Society, which has uses for their abilities, not much time spent explaining how this could be, no deep philosophy involved, a quick read and a lot of fun suitable for YA reading, sex isn't an issue, lost among all the swashbuckling. It includes some Women Musketeers and seems to be well researched, as it is translated from the original writer's French, some of the language used is occasionally clunky. These Musketeers are not The Three Musketeers, they are busted broke aristocrats who work for the Cardinal instead of the Queen and they are required to investigate a death.

Final Word – A universally positive response. Everyone who read it enjoyed it, it seems that the Dragons weren't really essential to the story at all, just decoration. These Dragons do have a power of Magic, but no more 'sorcery' is involved than in the Emperor's powers when he uses the force?

Deviations

Random Chatter - Prior to any discussion of the evenings books, there was a great deal of talk about the military history / credentials of **Joe Haldeman**, his connections with Australian SF fans (i.e. ANZAPAN Eric Lindsay) and also about steam age computer programming, such as Babbage's difference engine, jacquard

looms et al.

Re-reading Classic SF? - In the past re-reading 'cult' SF classics was more common, some people read the early Dune books and LOTR five or six times, to really get into the 'groove'. Possibly this was so because (until the late 1970s) SF was scarce, and popular titles were generally so much shorter? No longer the fashion, simply too many SF and Fantasy books coming onto the market, and their covers are too far apart?

Paul the Movie – A bloke's movie, lots of SF&F references, lots of swearing to try to get an 'R' certificate, an English movie made in America.

Never Let You Go the movie – Written by a half British Japanese Writer, set in a strange Alternate UK 1950s world, people cloned for spare parts, so they have to fully live during their brief lives, some sort of a metaphor for us three score and ten normals, not really good enough to qualify as SF?

The coming Sydney Film Festival – Will feature a 360 degree experience film (in vivid monochrome) that will be interactive, maximum of five audience members each screening. Brings back childhood memories of the 1970s 'Sensoround' experience offering a 360 degree film experience in an inflatable bubble tent!

May 2011

Garry's notes from the May 19, 2011 Infinitas Book Review meeting, the Books discussed were; The Wind up Girl by Paolo Bacigalupi - Science Fiction and The Dragon with the Girl Tattoo by Adam Roberts – Parody / Fantasy

Present were; **Amanda, April, Anthony, Beth (Elizabeth) Garry, Geoff, Len, Michael, Tim and first timer, Samantha H.**

The books discussed

The Wind up Girl by Paolo Bacigalupi - Science Fiction

This Hugo Award winning book was popular, so much so that it was out of stock at infinitas, stock was ordered, came and sold off the front counter before it could be shelved! Which made it rather difficult for those taking part in tonight's discussion. The story is set post Peak Oil, in Thailand, as an under regulated buffer state crossroads territory between East and West? GM crops wave wiped out other non-GM germ lines and the economy is running down. The rest of the world is presumably much the same. The Author has out a prequel and another story set in the same world. The Story structure is a bit unclear, as there are five point of view characters, which unfortunately most readers couldn't really get attached to. Which may be the Authors intent, to simulate in the reader a sense of alienation or detachment? However, it is a starkly believable world, with lots of ideas based on 'presently known' facts just taken a few steps further. Contains fruitphilia and springs, marvellous springs. Kinked Springs are used to store energy, rather than electrical batteries. One of the main characters, the Wind up Girl, is a troubling character, a GM product, part Labrador, her career is to be sexually abused each night and her genetic heritage is such that beyond a certain point of suffering her Labrador genes kick in and she begins to enjoys the 'attention', which makes for a nastier type of rape, mind and body through genetic preordination? It's a world where ethics and moral relativities have been

outsourced, the end product of Globalisation. The World building is very good, you could spend a long time chasing down the 'now time' precedents of developments in this world.

Points were awarded for the bad guy of the piece, an intelligent evil bastard who is a Thai beurocrat who has a plan of what to do after achieving power, rather than being wholly fixated on just gaining power. The incidentals and chit chat between the minor characters are creditable as well. The main thing about this book is that it is a credible 'could be' world, no credibility straining technology is required to be invented for the occasion and the people are familiar in their motivations as well?

Final word on this book – By my notes this book generated a considerable amount of discussion, about as much as for 'The Diamond Age' endurance. The world described in this book could very nearly be in the same world of 'The Diamond Age'. This book was greatly enjoyed by those who read it, for the mental stimulus of the ideas it contained and the world in which the story took place, rather than for the story itself which seemed a little patchy? We also liked the idea of wind up guns and batteries recharged by elephants, shame they couldn't work in 'Jumbo' airships pedalled / kick started by Elephants.

The Dragon with the Girl Tattoo by Adam Roberts, Parody / Fantasy

This book is a parody based on the English language title of the best selling 'The Girl with a Dragon Tattoo'. The Author of this book, A. R. Roberts, has also done a parody of 'The Hobbit', his take being,

'The Soddit'. This book is set in a Dragon world, where 'girls' are a rare and mythic sort of a creature. The Universe of this book posits a four Worlds Universe, one of Air, one of Earth (Humans), one of Fire (Dragons) and one of Water. Of these worlds, only Earth and Fire ever connect and interact. This book did have a plot, which didn't have much to do with the title. It contains a Punch type of humour and it also features a two chapter rape scene, which is not at all comedic. The best that can be said for the book is that the rape scene isn't dumbed down as in the movie treatment of the original book. Several readers have gone on to books two to five in the series! It is a slender teenage girl fantasy written by a then teenage girl writer. The central Mystery of this book is 'Who Would want to buy it?' If you have read and enjoyed the 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo', you'd only be disappointed in reading this parody treatment, if you were a genre reader attracted by the title, then you'd probably say 'so what?' on discovering that it was a parody of a non-genre title. So why wouldn't you want to read a better genre book instead.

Final Word – In spite of the above, two of the four people who read part of the book it enjoyed it, as light Easter long weekend reading. The most objective comment I can make on evaluating this book is that it generated only ten lines of notes / comments, compared to nearly 40 for the other book discussed this night – See also Len's review of this book on Infinitas bookshop forums.

Next Month's books are;
The Red Wolf Conspiracy by Robert V S Redick and **The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss** © May 2011 Garry Dalrymple

June 2011

Garry's notes from the June 9, 2011 Infinitas Urban Fantasy Book Review Discussion meeting

Present were; **Beth, Tim Martin, Garry Dalrymple, Geoffrey, April, Sarah, Charlie and Cate**

(NB the membership of this meeting is significantly different from the Infinitas SF&F Book Review Discussion meeting)

Book discussed was;

Death Most Definite by Trent Jamison (QLD Writer) (NB this book has previously been discussed at an Infinitas SF&F Book Review Discussion meeting)

I arrived late for this meeting, consequently this record of views exchanged on this book is to some degree incomplete.

Discussion of the Book

One Criticism was that the landscape descriptions were too specific and definite, distracting the reader from the plot? The central idea, with Death as a monopolistic Business subject to the threat of extra lethal Corporate takeovers and other power plays to do with using the powers of the Dead and wanting to come back and the Dead wanting to 'pass over'. The title of Black sheep available for the 'opt out' members of the family connected with this business.

Some found the Mash up of Mythos, to put Supernatural Death on a rational mundane business setting to be interesting. The book made use of body Art and tattoo languages borrowed from Simon Green and featured a Fig Tree that absorbs Souls and bodies, but in a different manner to

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Larry Niven's 'The Integral Trees'. The setting / ethos of the story is different from Piers Anthony's Incarnations series (where people get to fill the roles of Greek Gods with powers over mortal life and death. The book contains some perhaps unnecessary cringe worthy 'Death wearing Thongs' type Ockerisms

Conclusion - Most present enjoyed reading this book. It was good as a first novel, but not enough to motivate them to want to seek out and read the sequel. Those who bought it did so because he is an Australian Author, writing in a recognisable version of Brisbane. Generally, readers of the sequel were not overwealmed by the experience central idea of the first novel seems to run out of steam mid way through the second book.

Following this the meeting dissolved into a general discussion of SF&F related matters; such as

The grief that Publishers drop onto book readers and small bookshop owners in the pursuit of Blockbuster events and Best Seller margin cutting.

A discussion of the Blue Mountains Freecon and Hotel Gearin / **Jack Thompson.**

Jasper FForde's Ayre effect (?)

Garry's notes from the June 16, 2011 Infinitas Book Review meeting

Books discussed were; The Red Wolf Conspiracy by **Robert V S Redick** and The Name of the Wind by **Patrick Rothfuss**

Present were; **AA, April, Danielle, Garry, Julie-Anne, Mark, Michael** and **Tim**

The books discussed

and The Name of the Wind by **Patrick Rothfuss** - Fantasy

This book features an overly powerful Main character, possesses a *Dune* like adventure story. It explores Mentorship Vs Irresponsibility of character issues. The Book features Drugs and other power enhancing cheats. A Happy Book in spite of all the disasters that befell the Main Character who is supported by Side-kick companions. The parents in this novel are entirely expendable (what sort of a message for insecure kiddies is this). The book reads as if it were great fun for the writer, with hobbit like adventures and Drug addicted Dragons! Readers get the impression that the Writer is working out all his issues, over 720 pages! One reader enjoyed it so much that they ended up being one hour late for work one morning! Some readers got a Buzz from some stunning lines of Dialogue

Questions and quibbles – Too light reading for blokes? No, it is not 'Chick Lit, being character driven story telling that can be compared with **JRR Tolkien's** *The Lord Of The Rings* although it features a degree of geekyness and humour flows through the story

Final Word – Apparently this is a book worth reading, the rise of a new star, or a brilliant one off?

The Red Wolf Conspiracy by **Robert V S Redick** - Fantasy

The Name of the Wind was clearly the better book choice of this meeting's two Fantasy offerings. This book encountered a great deal of reader resistance / hard labour just to keep

reading it. It is a YA Fantasy chock full of gibberish character names to cloud your appreciation of the action, and the characters are on the main superficial characters who seem to be cardboard deep, the sort of cardboard encountered in playing board games. Some of the background scenery was attractive though. Plot concerns? Actually, this book possesses an overly complex rat's nest of them, in a Nun oppressed society where young women are prepared for servile wifedom. This is also a world that is infested with Mythic and Allegorical 'animals'.

Final Word – Definitely a 'B-Team' book, very light reading for uncritical readers

Other discussions included

The usual outpourings of bile about the collective sins of mainstream Publishers who deal in SF&F titles.

On the other hand, **Kevin J. Anderson**, a writer with 'Media Tie-in' Sci-Fi and mainstream SF is a veritable gentleman and a Saint for his continuing support of smaller SF&F bookshops even in the midst of very remunerative 'Pulp Culture Expo' tours such as Supernova.

Review of *Source Code* May 12, 2011, a Sydney Futurian Away Mission

The Headline should be, Six saw it, Six enjoyed it, several would enjoy seeing it again to tease out some of the details, at a re-screening or as a DVD. We would be very interested in seeing what the alternate endings were. It's a story about the human reactions to a device, a device with the ability to read / replay the last eight minutes of the life of someone killed in an

event, via the power of techno babble science, something about Quantum computing simulations and machine/brain interfaces etc.

We were a party of six to see this movie and we were able to discuss it at some length afterwards at Momma Mia's over pasta. This account is the combination of notes taken at the time and day after memories, thus it includes some content from all six people taking part in this Sydney Futurian 'Away Mission' as well as my own scathing wit. One thing I noticed about the screening we attended was the absence of 'spotty teenagers' in the audience. From what I was able to see the audience at this screening ranging in age from their late twenties to mid eighties.

About the movie - we learn in stages that a train bombing earlier this morning is the first step in a terror campaign threatening a mega-death incident in downtown Chicago and that the intention of the Source Code project is to be able to go back to this accident scene 'live' through the last memories of the deceased to detect the bomber and on this occasion, to prevent the later larger catastrophe. We also learn by stages that the hero of the piece is probably dead, or something worse. This is achieved through Groundhog Day like repetitions of the eight minutes available as the hero investigates both mysteries and incrementally adds to the audience's understanding of these issues. The Hero gets to save the World, Kiss the Girl, Talk to his father, the 'nearly dead' guy gets to die etc. Not a bad day's work for a dead guy? The 'Happy Ending' Implies that Source Code is able to actually change the past/present rather than just to review past scenes. The train bombing is prevented from taking place, and a message is sent to the

Source Code team ahead of the experiment being commenced and the bombing having been 'inexplicably' prevented and consequently Source Code not being initiated. Spot the logic loops in that one, so, do we have actual reality, or a series of branching realities?

Observations –

Chicago is the New Vancouver, plenty of American looking scenery, plenty of disposable Canadian actors for the minor or career challenging negative roles.

Black is the new German? Having exhausted all ethnic stereotypes (Americans couldn't understand the South African accents) in American Movies it is now OK / PC for African Americans to fill the usual crippled bearded chillingly mad scientist role usually reserved for 'Herr Doktor Von Sumthink'.

Chicago trains are weird, set up with a very theatrical half capacity mezzanine upper deck and lots of sharp edges.

The hero's not-quite-live body is partly brain dead and being without lower limbs / organs, would be eminently suited to a senior management role?

The movie features two female leads that you were waiting for to turn Avatar blue

Faults and branching points – This is a goodish SF story ruined by a happy ending? The ending you see was clearly one of several possible endings, but this was the one that the focus group indicated would be the most popular among (non-SF fan) cinema goers. The story suffers from Why would you bother to undertake the effort to adapt a story 'from the book' for a screen play, when you can just take pieces from a number of Movies and TV series?

One forking point between the movie and the alternative endings was the succession of scenes where the Main character morphs from wearing a T shirt to wearing

battledress?

The size if the van was a giveaway, just the thing for a big 'payload'?

The Bombing culprit was easy to spot due to the dropped wallet and his reaction to it being returned. Would it be entirely realistic for 'the Captain' to agree to subvert the program by turning off the main character's life support when she was so much part of the program, and when the memory wipe function would achieve much the same relief. The critical 'failure' of the piece, the elephant in the room, is that the hero manages to see and interact with things that the deceased subject could not have seen or interacted with during his last eight minutes of life, i.e. what happens off the train. The highly mobile gun, after falling off the train, it manages to land close to hand. If this could be accurately simulated to an evidentiary standard from other data, CC camera images etc. then what need to disturb the memories of the dead?

Conclusions – This is a goodish movie, with about as much SF as you can expect in an intended to be commercially successful Sci-Fi movie. For 'real' SF fans though it is slightly under whelming, a case of having see too much Dick for the ideas within Source Code to be appear new or novel. At another screening some gen Y movie goers were seen to walk out on this movie, and it is likely that those cinema goers who were sufficiently 'invested' in understanding 'Inception' might also be a bit disappointed in this movie (but they will be able to buy the Directors cut shortly?).

Some Movies and TV series that this Source Code brought to mind included; Avatar, use of a damaged military veteran Backstep, able to go back before a

disaster and phone in a warning. City on the Edge of Forever (Classic Star Trek episode, a cautionary tale showing the cost of love, and the consequences of changing the past. Ends happily ever after, as the woman doesn't come between Spock and Kirk, breaking up their bromance.

Deja Vu, a recent movie

Gilligan's Island (the one where they were able to go back in time, but were unable to prevent the 'three hour Cruise' etc.).

Groundhog Day, infinite repetitions of a day, eventually able to use this to advance a romance and to get off the karmic cycle?

Inception, involves getting into other people's heads / lives.

The Matrix, Alternate realities, computer interface etc.

Minority Report, 'seeing' the future via precogs and a computer interface, preventing crimes in advance.

Quantum Leap, able to jaunt through time, but restricted to the bodies of blood relatives?

Time Tunnel, travellers lost in time, hoping for recovery, able to experience past events, but warned not to change things.

Virtuosity, recent movie

Futurian only comments

The need to convene a group to see 'Source Code' rather crept up on me, I'd had the free movie passes (Doubles) for some time before the release on the movie, on the day after Starwars Day. Busy as anything at work, with early May being the 'peak' season for phone enquiries about the Naplan test. So I put out emails and assembled my 'troops' on the second Thursday of the month, a cold and windy night, it was also Stargate and STNG night on HD TV! With a double pass likely to be free I went to the Galaxy bookshop hoping to find one or two more 'spare women' from

the Paranormal Romance discussion group, to use the tickets. Galaxy was crowded, with a pre moving sale and 50% off specials on the floor. On my return I encountered **David Ritchie** (attended the 1952 Sydney SF convention) and his friend James who were studying the movie form guide so I invited them to join us boosting our numbers to 6.

On the contents of mailing 259 for mailing #261 of August 2011



1. **OBO #260 - Bruce Gillespie**
Useful Phoots and necessary captioning to put into correct context.

2. **Quoz 23 - Claire Briailey and Mark Plummer**

Dear Claire and Mark

At the other end of the world and at the other end of a public service 'business cycle' I find time on my hands, but much sympathy for the position you find yourself in, striving to set up for a 'least worse' re-organisation. In NSW there has also been a case of 'regime change', we have just passed a first hundred days milestone, and nothing much has happened, although there are 'plans' being floated in the papers about 'reforms'. The ideological changes between current and present regimes have been represented as being large, although it's more a matter of the old

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government having an 'ideology' of 'whatever it takes' and the new government committed to correcting 'Labor's Mistakes. I note the Tourism and Corflu Fanac documented by your colour Phoots. I do wonder however if there has ever been confusion between 'Corflu' and Chthulu. As I have this persistent vision of later day and inattentive Necromancers raising the spirit of a Corflu at one of their ceremonies. Hope you continue to remain esteemed and valued by your work colleagues, and if this fails, you could become a consultant, double the pay, less than half the integrity.

3. **TBS&E # 43 – Garry Dalrymple**

Need I comment on this? Yes I think I should. The attempt to 'rainbow' the Index section didn't really succeed did it?

4. **Rhubarb 36** – John and Diane Fox

Dear John and Diane

A faithful representation of a very active life in retirement, detail that is easy to overlook even though we meet each month for Futurian meetings. Movie, DVD and theatre viewing that I don't have the opportunity to keep up with. I notice that this is a cat and recipe free issue!

5. **BRG 69 - Bruce Gillespie**

At last, some comments to answer, even if they are re **TBS&E #41**, I'll try my best! Is Amber Smart? I would have to say with some reluctance that Amber and Rusty probably aren't too smart on absolute scales. They are however when they are motivated enough, they can be quite resourceful and persistent at times, meaning you have to anticipate what they might do and take appropriate precautions. A 'cleverness' that they have more so than for most dogs is a sense of three dimensions, i.e. they can and do climb

as a solution to 'problems', leading to 'Counter Surfing'.

Where I can I try to get Anthologies, particularly those with Australian Authors, mostly because I cannot afford the time to read through all/most/some Australian Spec Fiction magazines in search of the relatively few 'SF&F' stories that I enjoy. I review the individual stories in anthologies as an aid to future memory. At some point (I fantasise) perhaps my work will be valuable as a resource to those who come after us.

Re TBS&E #42 – I appreciate your sentiments about 'getting out', but my Mother's condition at 84/85 is that she really can't live on her own, I would fear for her wellbeing and for that of the dogs, but she can live in her own home probably for a few more years yet before going into care becomes an issue.

The Charlie Stross collection is by the Author's estimation a bit of a mixed bag, containing story ideas that failed to develop to full 'adult' book length. The Futurians report (on the year's Bests and Worst) reflects that we are different people. If there were greatly more of us, then a more smooth and homogenised set of results might result, but isn't the breadth of opinion more important than the average opinion? Generally enjoyed the smorgasbord of detail displayed in your comments to other ANZAPANS

6. **Bookmark 30 – Michael F. Green**

Pleased that you found the Ian M Banks interview interesting, with reporting 'live' meetings I'm aware of how only a fraction of the content of the meeting is reproduced as text, technical difficulties with the broadcast were at times quite pronounced, which I think you can notice at times.

Your Flood and post Flood report covers in great detail the consequences behind the

headlines of 'homes flooded' given similar experiences, my long term plans for all in-Garage storage (lowest part of Eulabah Avenue) to be 30 cm off the concrete and mostly on wheels (Particularly bookshelves!), also, once sorted, I'm tending to put a lot of papers into zip lock bags before I send them off to Shed or Garage.

7. **Necessity 99: We're Dreaming** - Jack Herman

Now something that ANZAPAN readers might be surprised at is Jack's involvement in the 'News of the World' phone tapping scandal. As detail emerged of the scandal pundits were free with their opinions, some of them quite difficult to square with emerging or known facts. One opinion offered by an Australian commentator in the Sydney Morning Herald was that the Australian Press Council, where Jack works, should be immediately abolished on the grounds that an Australian institution like this had done nothing to prevent egregious behaviour 'over there'. Me thinks they do protest too much!

Re TBS&E #42 I'm afraid I did miss the 1950s and 1960s as you describe. My main and lasting memories of my Father's workplace The National Cash Register Company, an iconic US Multinational at Turrella (always used to wave from the train window as it went past the factory, was that it brought the world to Australia, with turmoil in Europe South America and South East Asia meaning that Ex-overseas NCR staff and their families were always arriving and you'd meet them at annual company picnics, well before 'Multiculturalism' was even a word. Also, while growing up, much of the fittings and furnishings of my life were made by dad from the wood and plywood from NCR packing crates from the US and Scotland. No, Mad Men didn't mean much to me. The facile critique of

Inception was intended, I was in fact quoting the reputed opinion of an easily confused by SF movie review whose imagination was taxed by the effort of describing the movie. Find myself in moderate agreement with your analysis of US and Aust politics, just hope that someone soon gets into the habit of describing the 'Popular Movement' of feigned public outrage that Tony Abbott would like to ride into the lodge on as the 'De-caff Tea Party', coz it's appeal is 'grounds less'?

8. **Lyn McConchie's New Book 'Field Daze'**

Read with interest, no comments at this stage.

9. **Jeanzine 2011-1 – Jean Weber**

Dear Jean

An interesting view of a country I'm unlikely to visit in the near future.

10. **Kingdom of the Bland** - Eric Lindsay

Dear Eric

Always interesting to see how intelligent life can be sustained in the tropics, as for your views on the NBN, Alternative power et al, perhaps it is always best to keep in mind that Politics is the art of the possible, and we can leave long term pricing and benefits analysis to the market to sort out once the cats are herded in the approximately correct direction. Personally (and I'm no longer a part millionaire Coal mining Magnate, I've switched to investing in Uranium), I would like to see a lot more openness in the funding of Big Peak Load alternative energy, including Geothermal and Solar Thermal.

11. **That's Not a Cyclone, This is a Cyclone; Eric Lindsay**

Dear Eric

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Sniff... I've seen bigger storms on Jupiter and Saturn. But seriously I would have thought that any 'big Blow' plan would include the arrival of a self powered refrigerator truck to store fridge contents for those residents who choose to flee or who do not have a personal generator? Hope your travel plans for 2011 proceed.

12. **From the Lair of the Lynx 63** –
LynC

Dear Lync

I read with some sympathy your description your Mother's new health issue. There are specific anti-nausea (formal and informal medicine) treatments available that might help make your Mother's life and treatment more endurable.

Your Power issue is a bit of a worry, as my Sister-in-law has about a dozen panels, on an East facing roof frontage, not all day exposure. If I was to solar up my place, it would be preferentially on the roof of the garages, easier maintenance access and to cool the garage as a working space. And I would be inclined to go for a small windmill turbine for after dark and bad weather insurance.

13. **Panopticon 65** - **Dan McCarthy**

Dear Dan

No sorry I can't really describe it any further than I have, maybe it was only a Were-Chapel that feeds on non-denominational pilgrims before transforming itself into something else and fleeing the scene.

I agree with you that it can be quite depressing to contemplate a return to Canterbury, when it is all fixed up and no longer the place that it was in your memories. I recall the Canterbury Astronomical Society used to meet in the towers / turrets of the University Building, presumably they two have been inconvenienced. Re your comments to

Roger about 'Elder Porn' it sets my mind to thinking about what images Mormon Missionaries would consider to be recreationally stimulating, possibly something mild, or possibly something quite wild indeed?

14. **Soil Too hard But Earth Unstable;**
Murray MacLachlan

Dear Murray

Grim times to be recounting as a holiday report. I hope that some progressive sea change does emerge, possibly out of a sense of national re-building after the Canterbury quakes. Kiwis do deserve better, let's hope that it is sooner rather than later.

15. **Land of 10,000 Loons** - **Jeanne Mealy**

Dear Jeanne

That small green dog that you saw just might have been a Green Basenjis, if so you might be about to go on a journey of personal transformation, or it could have been a spray pack of football supporter dye? Snow, Ice and more Snow, seems to be the case that each time I get to make mailing comments I'm replying to notes of your winter adventures.

16. **Moz 10** – **Murray Moore**

Dear Murray

I try not to draw much 'National Pride' from the success of Australian Actors at Oscars or similar awards ceremonies, to a great extent they achieve these prizes through individual talent rather than through any real commitment of National will through them, on the other hand I'm more interested in hearing about Australian Scientists and Writers, making it big, as their success combining both talent and some degree of local national support,

such as in their training or the opportunities they are offered.

Was interested to read of your adventures with the NZ Natcon prior to Aussiecon, this mailing is proving to be quite the A_NZ_APA issue compared to most. I'm always more tempted to try to attend a New Zealand Natcon than a West Australian one. Incidentally, I think that the feature known as the 'Tarpeian Rock' at / near the Sydney Opera house is a Roman version of the Greek Areopagus, no doubt Jack will correct me if I'm wrong.

17. **Ping! - John Newman**

Dear John

Glad to hear that you are likely to be receiving the metric / legal equivalent of a 'win' on the Bank building effort, how much local goodwill will this end up costing them? Sorry to hear about the bees, clearly some at Quarantine / bio-security dropped the ball to let this nasty in. My friend Stephen Bingle cares a great deal about bees and their current difficulties, more so than is appreciated within the Australian Democrats I fear.

By Now, months and months after the event, Rusty is OK, and my knee is working fine. In the case of letters received and submissions I'm carrying them across to the next issue of the Pasturian, as I do not believe that I could sustain a month by month exchange of letters.

18. **Sparrowgrass & Battle-twigs 18: R Orsanski**

Dear Roman

The version of Metropolis that you describe was also shown in Sydney, but I'm not sure whether it received the full AV treatment you describe, in my mind it raises questions, what is the 'Authentic' version, that which was seen on first release, that which has been 'improved' with new soundtracks?

I note your confidence with the technology, but have no real sense of the advantages of it.

19. **YRKYHWYFAWIYB 134 - Cath Ortlieb**

Dear Cath

Hope your mum gets better, congratulations to the goal oriented. Ah the Vultures of the Press and their wind-up toys. From where I live, near the M5 Expressway and where I work, the only Tower building in Bankstown I regularly see the press helicopters floating in the sky over some accident or crime in progress. An awful lot of aviation expense for fleeting evening news coverage, particularly when air ambulance budgets are tight?

I remember a case many years back when Sydney was ringed by bush fires and a commercial radio broadcaster was demanding that emergency response vehicles clear the roads to allow the broadcaster's reporting teams to access the area tell Sydney what they needed to know!

20. **Canal 7 – Marc Ortlieb**

Dear Marc

The Bike fittings shown and your adaptor / refilling adventures are similar to what I experienced some years ago, the 'peculiar' valve fittings being part of the reason for a 'cheap' bike, until the inconvenience of re-fitting it with standard 'truck' fitting tubes. I think that the importance of vision in evolution is gradually gaining ground, effects suggestive of vision evolution (and then from Vision to Intelligence after numerous equilibria on the way) are being seen, now that the idea is gaining currency.

21. **OZ SF Fan – Lucy Schmeidler**

Dear Lucy

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A heroic Hand written contribution under the circumstances, illness and technology support denial. I write confident that by now you will be experiencing improvements on several fronts.

22. ANZAPA 770 17 - Roger Sims

Dear Roger

An idealized ANZAPA member on the Cover, a one eyed Cat Person with armour? The progress of an illness within your closed community puts me in mind of that fannish experience, the outbreak of a 'con flu' at the Australian Worldcons I've experienced (and a few Natcons?)

Re your Comments to Knud about Worldcon selection - If you are trying for a 'fairer share' system to distribute Worldcons I think you can't go past a cumulative vote system, i.e. 'All' Cities with bid groups are on the ballot, and each year Chicago might get 4,000 votes as opposed to UK, 1500 votes and Australia / Melbourne 400 votes and these add to an ongoing tally, so that one year the front runners might be New York 7,000 votes and San Francisco 6500 votes, the 5,000 of so members of the current Worldcon could 'veto' the New York bid by voting 4,000 to anything but New York etc. The highest total vote gets offered the Worldcon two years hence, and their total votes zeroed until after their Worldcon takes place. The overall effect would be a distribution of Worldcons roughly proportional to their membership of Worldcon voting fandom. It would also allow for some holiday planning, if you knew that a European / Australian / Asian Worldcon was almost inevitable in the next two or three years. If after 12 years 'Aussiecon 7' looked like getting up, in the next few years or so, then a con running committee could be formed out of natives or the floating Worldcon committee, but this

would be only two or three years out from the Worldcon, rather than having to be a generational obsession?

If no Worldcon running committee was available, the votes would still stand, but annually the Worldcon would be offered to the next highest score with a documented Worldcon running committee. More realistically, an Aussiecon7 Worldcon could attract three competing bid committees, Perth Melbourne and Auckland and a run off 'Primary' of all financial 'Aussiecon 7 Supporters' could determine the City and fund the pre-con expenses.

23. The Antipodean Areopagus 2 – Bill Wright

Dear Bill

You make Thailand, out of Bangkok to seem to be a calmer and more serene travel location to the image seen on TV. I know that the King is ailing so the country may soon have to go through both Regime and Monarch change in a short period of time.

24. Les Chattes Parties 112 - Sally Yeoland

Dear Sally

I note your builder grief, with minor structural repairs being needed, and also your cat based 'regime change'. I can understand your loss and your decision to accept the kitten that fate has sent your way, but I can't conceive of a 'dog person' making the same replacement decision so lightly, even though a dog is more likely to be a 10 year commitment and a cat a 15 year one. I agonised for months about the hypothetical addition of another dog, and even when Rusty became available it took me a fortnight to decide on balance that it would be a good thing for me and mother to have the second dog. I guess part of it might be that there are many

breeds / sizes of dogs, bred for particular abilities and proclivities, but that all cats are roughly the same size/shape and bred has little determination on character and temperament? As for Mother, I'm resigned to it growing worse over time, more bad days than good days ahead. As a survival mechanism I think I'm growing a thicker shell on the subject.



ISBN 0-441-84760-9

A Usual Lunacy, by D. G.

Compton (UK), Science Fiction, dark conspiratorial politics and a sexually transmitted disease – Very 1970s SF, pre-Aids readers, 215 pages (c) 1978, 19 mm, Read June 25 to July 04, 2011.
Published in TBS&E No. 44

Yes, a book about a sexually transmitted infection, indications of a government set up and cover up, a story that embodied much of the 'Lost World' of 1960s to 1970s hedonism. This story starts out as a rather puzzling courtroom drama, I mean, you know that there is a sexually transmitted disease involved, so how does this involve a very Serious Crime / Court Case? It takes a fair while for the necessary details to emerge, drop by drop, as the defendants, bored and in court, recollect the events that brought them to this position. What we learn is that an Agency's has plans for the male main character, he is to meet up with an Airline

Stewardess who has been infected with a rare type of 'love bug'. Mutual re-infection between the two will result in a self absorbed / self obedient pair, then the bloke is cured of the illness, so that he will still be following their orders. The 'game' is this, Global Passenger Air Transport involves sedating and stacking passengers before revival at destination. An aircraft with a VIP on board is hijacked in order to bring about the release of a recently imprisoned 'British Nationalist' Leader. The Male Main character, and the stated intention of the Agency, is that both defendants will 'get off' on the basis of sexually oriented / mediated insanity. This plot succeeds (partly), there is a change of government etc. and the patsy receives a sudden remission of his sentence, via an extrajudicial execution after the court has risen.

Conclusion – A very contrived sort of a plot, you expect Jerry Cornelius to burst into the court at any time, or to reveal that he has been running the show since the get go. I don't think you could write / sell a story like this anymore, mind control and coercion through 'love' is no longer on the dark corporate agenda of the powers that be, and post-Aids I think we are all too well versed in the ways of the Virus to accept the 'Science' of what we are offered in this story. An enjoyable read, if slow to become comprehensible due to the book's structure.

ISBN -13-978-0-297-84698-

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**Washington's Wars, from
Independence to Iraq,**

by **(General Sir) Michael Rose** (UK), A history of the war by which the American Colonies gained their independence with

aside by side description of the Iraq war.
 Hard Cover, 212 pages (c) 2007, 22 mm
 Read June 19 to 25, 2011
 Published in TBS&E No. 44

It is a truth almost universally accepted that whatever the 'Right' or 'Wrong' reasons for getting into Iraq, the Bush administration conducted their project of Regime Change and the occupation of Iraq in a particularly bone headed way. This book does a similar job on the administrations under King George et al who 'Lost' the American Colonies, by the application of the wrong military and political policies to the circumstances of the times and the facts of 'war on the ground' across the Atlantic. They treated the American colonies as they treated Irish rebellions, in spite of the clear differences between the two. The 'Why?' of all this is left hanging in the breeze, Had the fall of the Berlin Wall really 'abolished history?', or had it in falling merely revealed a facade of American wishful thinking?

Conclusion – The Conclusion to all war Histories, whether written by 'winners' or 'losers' can always be encapsulated in five stark words - 'They Should Have Known Better', but each generation has to learn this, and life liberty and much treasure has to be spent until both sides come to realize these lessons. I found this book to be a useful strategic overview of the 1776 to 1781 War, shorn of the usual enthusiasm to derive a sense of building a 'national character' out of this conflict. The Commentary and comparisons with the war in Iraq circa 2003 I found to be merely distractions, and perhaps his speculative conclusions may be confirmed had I read these sorts of books, Historical crime, expecting an accurate

ISBN 0-7493-2057-5

The Hidden Scrolls,

by **Neil Asher Silberman** (US), Non-Fiction, Religion and History, 306 pages (c) 1994, 20 mm - Read May 21 to 29, 2011

Published in TBS&E No. 44

Can there ever be one conclusive interpretation to the Dead Sea Scrolls and their significance? Probably not, just as there is a 'new' Jesus to for every generation and era, the interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls will always be subjective and subject to change over time.

This book's chapters cover a great deal of ground, dealing with the Author's own particular take on the documents, that they were as much political as religious and directly reflect on the troubles of the time, 'Roman' Palestine, 200 BCE to ~100 CE. However, before he can deal with this, he has to de-mythologise some of the personalities and facts behind the discovery of the Scrolls, as these, the Author believes, have a great deal to do with how the 'orthodox' interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls was created over time.

My take on all this is that there are three broad explanations of what the Dead Sea Scrolls are about, 1, These are documents from 'about' the time of Christ and hence have some value in interpreting the early Christian experience. 2, They are the insular religious writings of a splinter faction of the Jewish religious tradition of Roman Palestine. 3, They are the political /religious writings of the resistance to the Romanization / Hellenization of Common era Palestine, expressed as an apocalyptic religious narrative.

On top of this I would have to add another level of 'Who' and 'What' about the Scrolls. If you were to go to my shed you will find

an archive of newspaper clippings, and some SF&F books that are too horrible to be let out.

If you go to my garage you will find stacks of books, some that I have read, some that I intend to read 'at some time'. Which of these two archives represents the real 'me', my motivations and current opinions. I expect the same would be the case for the Dead Sea Scrolls, some would be spare copies just put away out of sight, some texts best not left lying around, and some, the truly valuable stuff that must be preserved at all costs etc. Very hard to make one conclusion out of disparate discoveries of material put away at varying times?

Conclusion – The story behind the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls Leaves Dan Brown in the dust! At times I was mindful of the part in The Hitch Hikers Guide to The Galaxy, where the ultimate computer, Deep Thought, is working on the 'Answer to Life, The Universe and everything', a task that will make philosophers redundant, but opens up long term career opportunities for these philosophers to speculate on exactly what Deep Thought will ultimately come up with, as it will take a loooong time to come up with it's answer. The same is pretty much true of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the time it has taken for them to be 'out in paperback', as interpreted by go slow academics, has contributed greatly to a sense that there must be a 'Secret of the Dead Sea Scrolls', a secret that is renewed and revised each decade or so, in the absence of definitive answers. And, What about the followers of John the Baptist, the Mandeans?'. What do their scriptures / traditions have to say about the events and times of their separation from the Judaic mainstream and the time of the beginnings of the Christian tradition? If the early church fathers thought they were worth mentioning in the Gospels (as were the

Zoroastrian 'Magi' following a star to Bethlehem) then, where are they in the Dead Sea Scrolls debate? © Garry Dalrymple June 2011

ISBN 1-85326-209-9
The Man Who Would be
King and other stories,

by **Rudyard Kipling** (UK Dec'd), a collection of 14 stories set in Victorian India, 211 pages (c) ~1890 14 mm Read May 11 to 18, 2011. Published in TBS&E No. 44

This book is a collection of stories about life and death in British India. It reads as something of a road trip along the dusty roads of India, where you encounter the newcomers, old stagers and the children of British India and each features in stories that illuminate some aspect of India as the stories unwind. It presents an experience of Victorian life and attitudes in India, which at times to this reader seem more alien than anything encountered by the Star ship Enterprise? I guess the original audience for these stories would have been the great many ordinary 'English' men and women who knew themselves to be members of a great British Empire and were curious about what life in the furthest reaches of Empire was like.

The Education of Otis Yeere

– A laboured story about the 'bringing up' of a new arrival to India, as managed by two grand dames of British India. I couldn't really get into this story, as important as it was to the 'set up' for the following stories in the collection. I found it tedious, an Edwardian comedy of manners, for two voices, resembling the script for a radio play?

At the Pit's Mouth

– A story of morality and its consequence, a couple who are planning to elope and a grave that will inevitably be filled.

A Wayside Comedy

– Infidelity by omission and commission and ‘forbidden’ romances within the suffocatingly small community of an Indian station, keeping up appearances and maintaining form.

The Hill of Illusions

– A conversation in the Dark, reputations and assignments change overnight.

A Second-Rate Woman

– Deemed a ‘second rate woman’ due to dress sense and social class, a woman is redeemed due to her nursing care during a Diptheria epidemic (also seen in Stalky and Co).

Only a Subaltern

– The arrival, development and death of a promising and charismatic young officer, carried away by an illness sweeping through his regiment. This whole story, about the death of many in a regiment via illness rather than battle, is an illustration of the reality behind the face of Empire, the daily tragedy that was a part of the British experience while ruling India?

The Phantom Rickshaw

– A very peculiar Ghost story, confided to an attending physician, the story of a ‘cad’ who is haunted unto death by the spirit of the woman he has abandoned after elopement, and by her Rickshaw and servants, all deceased!

My Own True Ghost Story

– An interesting story to contrast to the preceding one. It involves a newspaper correspondent’s overnight stay at a rundown and out of the way government guest house that becomes a ghostly experience by night but by daylight and a subsequent inquiry stands revealed with a mundane explanation.

The Strange ride of Morrowbie Jukes

– A ghost Story, or possibly a story of the declared legally dead, but inconveniently still living. A rider has a fall and finds himself incarcerated in inescapable prison / village for people who have been given up for dead. Probably worth pointing out that India still has a problem with people who are ‘legally dead’, their property usurped by conniving and grasping relatives. Escape is made possible only by a faithful native retainer.

The Man Who Would be King

– The Story in this collection that most readers will be familiar with from the movie. This story starts and ends in a Newspaper office, as two near do wells hatch a scheme to set themselves up just beyond the border of British India, hoping to rely on their military experiences and a mule load of modern weapons to help them carve a kingdom out of the primitive tribes of the lawless wilderness of Kafiristan (now the tribal areas of Pakistan, Taliban refuge). Their knowledge of Freemasonry gives them an unexpected leg up. Their downfall, comes after an attempt to get married, which reveals them to be merely men and not the gods as the natives had previously presumed (the Captain Cook manoeuvre) resulting in vengeance.

Wee Willie Winkie

- The beloved child of a regiment, the six year old son of the Colonel gets himself in a perilous situation which armed by naivety he talks himself out of.

Baa Baa Black Sheep

– The other side of an Anglo Indian childhood, the enforced separation of children from parents for an education at ‘home’ entrusted to strangers.

His Majesty the King

– A child purloins a piece of jewellery, with a note attached, which unintentionally delays the progress of his adults

relationships.

The Drums of the Fore and Aft

– A new and under prepared regiment's first battle results in a disgraceful flight from the field of battle, which is partly redeemed by the unthinking naïve courage of two drummer boys, trapped in no-mans-land during the battle, who play on, and die as heroes while spurring the counter attack and the redemption of their regiment?

Conclusion – Having read through this collection I now have a better appreciation of a comment made at a Sydney SKSA meeting, to the effect that the content and order of these collections is not merely random or organised by date of completion. This collection takes you on a journey of sorts, you encounter new to India adults who need to be 'formed' by old hands, the peculiar mores of life in India, where quite ordinary people 'from home' are given opportunities and responsibilities during a life in India which at times resembles that of castaways on a desert Island, only the Island is 'Britishness' amongst a continent covering sea of Indian people. In addition to the 'bringing up' of the next generation of 'old India hand' there is also a sub theme of being brought up as a British child in India. Another aspect to many of the stories in this collection is a Vonnegut like sense to some of the stories, where you are told at the beginning of the story how it will end, usually the 'moral' of the story, but the journey through the story to this destination is still something of an unfolding mystery.

ISBN 0-7434-8860-1

The Grantville Gazette

A collection of Short Stories selected / edited by **Eric Flint (US)**, 5 stories, 3 nonfiction articles, 360 pages, © 2004, 25 mm

Published in TBS&E No. 44

This book is part of the phenomena associated with '1632' a novel about a 10 km divot of modern rural small town America displaced in time and space to Germany in 1632, the era of Europe's religious civil wars. Thus it is both an Alternate History and a 'post apocalypse' SF story as Grantville's inhabitants get on with dealing with the consequences of the 'Ring of Fire'. 1632 has generated a great deal of interest, practically a new subgenre of its own, and many 'in the same universe' stories, including a host of fan written short stories deemed good enough to publish. This publication, after the commercial success of the sequel collections contains both fictional short stories (5 ea) and three speculative non-fiction articles exploring aspects of the post 1632 world in order to try to fill in some of the gaps created by the original book and it's sequels.

As I see it, part of the phenomenal success of 1632 is that it hits a number of buttons that are almost certain to appeal to (mostly US) SF fans. The central conceit is that small town rural 'plain folks' Americans uniquely possess all the skills of their ancestors, the American sense of 'can do' to be able to survive and prosper in the alien environment of Europe in 1632, as well as possessing intact the political principals of their idealized 1776 fore bearers. Thus, shortly they will change the world and re-make it in their (US) image, the adventure lies in telling how they will bring this about.

Fiction

Portraits by **Eric Flint** – A portrait sitting opportunity with the Artist Rubens during negotiations during a war, is used as an opportunity to pass across battlelines to the enemies of the Grantville Americans

the specific instructions about how to manufacture a modern medicine to treat a wave of illness that usually follows in the wake of military campaigns, killing more civilians than combatants.

Anna's Story by **Loren Jones** – A young girl fleeing the attentions of rampaging mercenaries encounters an elderly American. As the Elderly American is drawn out of retirement, the young German girl and her family are gradually absorbed into the society of the Grantville Americans.

Curio and Relic by **Tom Van Natta** – A hardened and elderly Vietnam vet is gradually and reluctantly drawn into the Grantville American's self defence military, as a scrounger in chief and armourer. The title, 'A Curio and Relic', describes both an elephant gun and the Vietnam vet. This gun provides the punch line and the climax to a skirmish, as it can shoot through trees!

The Sewing Circle by **Georg Huff** – A group of children decide to try to create a commercial product that can sell in the 1600s out of the 20th century technology and information held by the Grantsville enclave. Explores the difficulties of 'enterprise' under such conditions.

The Rudolstadt Colloquy by **Virginia De Marce** – The tedium of a religious conflagration over the pastoral care of the souls of Grantville's ten or so Lutherans, provides an opportunity for influence dealers to meet on the sidelines and for big political deals to be made. This story is a nod toward acknowledging the reality of the 1630s world, that the Grantville people have arrived possessing religious views likely to be seen as 'Heretical' to all sides in the middle of a Civil War based on competing Religious dogmas and intolerances.

Fact

Radio in the 1632 Universe by **Rick**

Boatright – The complexities of trying to set up radio communication in an epoch coinciding with the Maunder Minimum of Solar activity (and the ability to bounce Radio Waves off the Ionosphere

They've got bread Mould, so why can't they make Penicillin? By **Robert Gottlieb** – Limitations on the survivability of modern type medicines.

Horse Power by **Karen Bergstrahl** – A long winded passage on the infinite variety of horses of European history, their specific qualities and classifications that would have been essential military, agricultural and commercial knowledge during the 1630s.

Conclusion – These stories about a 'pocket' or seed America displaced in time tend to focus on the 'domestic questions' incidental to the new manifest destiny and military adventures of the Grantville Americans. They are both

technologically and socially out of place compared to the new world that they must live in. It is interesting to compare and contrast these stories, about the lives of a group of displaced civilians as opposed to the simpler and more usual displacement in SF stories of a military unit, as in **Jerry Pournelle's** 'Janissaries' or **John Birmingham's** 'World War 2.1' series etc. The former two stories don't bring their families with them etc.

You can't help but put yourself into the mood of the story, as you consider what you might do in circumstances similar to those of the characters of these stories, i.e. personally I would have gone for manufacturing wooden Bicycles with leather tyres ahead of sewing machines etc. Given this effect, I predict that this 'franchise' will be with us for some time.

I was surprised that in this book there was no speculation about how the 'Ring of Fire'

event took place, or if once, why not other Grantvilles out there, scattered over Space and Time?

ISBN 978-0575-09653-0

Dead Reckoning, by **Charlaine**

Harris (US), A Sookie Stackhouse adventure #11, a Supernatural Romance novel, 325 pages (c) 2010, 26 mm, Read May 4 to 99, 2011 –

Published in TBS&E No. 44

Contemplating this book, sent to me as a review copy, before I started reading it, I realized that it illustrated the one occasionally true basis that proponents of 'Literary' Fiction may use to look down on 'Genre' fiction. It is that in 'Literary' Fiction the whole story is usually told in one instalment and that's it, Conception to delivery without (usually) any further adventures contemplated. I.e. with Moby Dick etc. or Proust's 'Remembrance', there really isn't much chance of a rematch, but in genre fiction there can be countless new adventures of Superman or Agatha Christie Investigates etc. This book is number 11 in the Sookie Stack house series, it bears the endorsement on the cover 'Now the HBO original series True Blood'

Conclusion – If you know and enjoy the Sookie Stackhouse world then you will probably enjoy this outing and the many further episodes that are likely to follow in the wake of the successful Cable TV program. Like Vampires, these books breed their own followers who are hooked on the story's life blood.

ISBN 1-4000-3007-2 **Deus**

Irae, by **Philip K. Dick (dec'd)** and

Roger Zelazny (Both US), Post Apocalyptic SF and Religion, 182 pages (c)

1976 14 mm, Read April 99 to 99, 2011.

Published in TBS&E No. 44

My first reaction to coming across this book (a reprint) was to wonder if it was a case of 'Written by ... from notes left by ...', but it was written while Philip K Dick was still alive, so presumably it was a co-operative venture, and this leads to the question of which parts would be Dickian and which parts would be read like a Zelazny story, particularly when you consider 'Damnation Alley'? The story is set in the generation after the War, a Nuclear exchange aided by germ warfare and Nerve Gas etc. which has reduced the US population almost to extinction. A major casualty of this war was religion as we know it. The 'Good' God is in eclipse, the prince of Peace was collateral damage, better to appease the 'Bad' God in the hope of mercy? This new God has a human form, the originator of the war and an artist is sent on a pilgrimage to capture his likeness for an altarpiece. The story features drug mediated prophecy, Miracles, the power of the image, a long running argument about the nature of God and a great deal more as the artist moves across the face of this world on a pilgrimage. It seemed to me a bit muddled, two writers not in opposition, but at cross purposes. I can't help think of it being something of a darker 'response' to Miller's 'A Canticle for Leibowitz' (the idea of post Bomb Pilgrimage and iconography) or a second thoughts on the world of 'Damnation Alley', (dealing with the 'Why?' of the War that brought about this damaged world and it's few human (and mutated) survivors. Lots of ideas here, compressed into a march of a few days and their lasting consequences?

Conclusion – I read this as a curiosity, I

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wasn't aware that **Philip K Dick** had written anything with a co-writer. It's not 'Classic Dick' but it is an interesting read and thin enough to encourage the not so motivated reader to just pick it up and go with it regardless if you prefer Dick (cerebral SF) to Zelazny (SF verging on Quest Fantasy?).

ISBN 0-671-03889-3

The Deceivers, by **Alfred Bester**

(Dec'd US), Science Fiction, with a commentary by Harlan Ellison, 268 pages (c) 1981 15 mm, Read April 16 to 28, 2011
Published in TBS&E No. 44

Alfred Bester lives, as a dark but complex Psicorp character in Babylon 5.

As an SF Author he was undoubtedly one of the greats, but for many decades he was lost to SF writing, as he was much in demand as a writer of TV and movie scripts. Consequently this book marks a return, after a 'retirement' from this previous career. I found it to be a surprising book, very confident and to a degree subgenre defying. It is a quest, it could be described as 'Space Opera' and possibly Cyber Punk. It freely describes a world based on highly developed Sciences but even the 'Magic Energy Science' that turns out to be essential mystery to be solved during the process of the quest. The hero of the piece is an orphan saved and raised to be a king of a Maori inhabited Space dome on the satellite of an outer planet. Most Nationalities or language groups have their own domes. The genesis of the hero is unique (and a bit disturbing), an unwanted foetus who has been exposed to mutational rays from a nuclear reactor (Radio Active Spiders having been sprayed?). The consequences for the child are superior pattern recognition skills, abilities that read

very much like high functioning Autism or Aspergers! These Pattern recognition skills are very much in demand, he becomes an award winning investigative journalist, meets a girl, who turns out to be a shake changing alien from Titan! She disappears, presumed captured by the Meta (Magic Energy Source) monopolists. The adventure proceeds.

Conclusion – It doesn't read like a 1980s book, although you can spot elements of the story that go way back. It is a lesser story to 'Tiger Tiger' but written in a fresher date defying style? (c) **Garry Dalrymple**
May 2011

ISBN 0-435-21246-4

All quiet on the Western Front,

by **Erich Maria Remarque** (Germany),
Translated by **A. W. Wheen** (UK)
A story of the German experiences of WW1, 248 pages, (c) 1929, 19 mm Hard cover,
Read April 25 & 26, 2011,
Published in TBS&E No. 44

Well, I did pick this book to read as a balance to all the multimedia stimuli due to arrive on Anzac day. I found it a useful insight into the thinking / experience of the other side and also useful in understanding better the basis of other German centred war stories I have read, the Gunner Ashe series and Sven Hassel and his imitators. It reveals, as you might expect both the chaos and confusion of War being a universal experience, the soldiers on both sides having more in common with each other, across the lines, than with their own masters and commanders. The story focuses on the survival of a group of classmates who

were encouraged to enlist in their final year of high school at the outbreak of the war. The story starts in about 1917 and this cohort is already half used up by the war. In the background at this point is a widespread perception that Germany is unlikely to be able to meet the Allies' advantages in manpower and resources. The telling of the story, mostly as memories of what they did before the book's present, reveals a bit about the 'military ready' society of WW1 era Germany, a system designed to convert citizens into soldiers, as opposed to 'our' side's ad hoc creation of 'citizen soldiers' a lasting legacy of the UK civil wars of the 1640s. As in other German centred military fiction (I really must get round to reading my copy of 'Good Soldier Sveik' some time, perhaps next Anzac Day?), there were rorts and capers, taking opportune advantage of official love of order, and one instance of violent retribution against figures who have used their 'authority' under the system in an excessive manner.

Conclusion – Is this a Great Book, it might have been received as such at the time when it was published, but Eighty years on and how many books focussed on war weariness each and every generation as after the 'victory' or the cessation of a conflict, it delivers few surprises. The lasting surprise, a week after reading it and after an immersion in the minutia of past wars, I'm surprised at how little specific detail of dates/battles etc are included in this book. It really is a story of an impression and an experience of a war in general rather than a specific story of one man's war. In an alternate Universe, you could imagine what sort of a better book could have emerged if Rudyard Kipling and Erich Maria Remarque had been able to collaborate on a different, very much sharper, 'All quiet on the Western Front'.

(c) Garry Dalrymple May 2011

No ISBN, Through a Glass Clearly,

A collection of four stories by **Isaac Asimov (US Dec'd)**, the stories having been published by US magazines in the early 1950s, 124 pages (c) 1967, 9 mm. Read March 29 to April 7, 2011 - Published in TBS&E No. 44?

This slim volume collection features four short stories by a past master of Science Fiction. All date from the 1950s, all were published in major SF&F magazines of the day, so they are in some sense a time capsule of the 'of the moment' concerns of early 1950s SF Editors, Readers and Writers? The time of the First Australian SF convention (to put it in some context). Do they stand the test of time? Are the issues dealt with in a manner that still speak to the reader after Sixty years?

It's Such a Beautiful Day – In a world of point to point matter transmission 'Doors' a small child's refusal to use them, and a decision to go out the small door into the real world is viewed as pathological. Referred to a Psychologist, the Psychologist becomes a convert to exploring the outside world.

Belief – Is about a physicist who has a problem. He can levitate, but he can't scientifically explain how he does it. This story grows from a dream experience of floating / falling from a height immediately before awakening, what if it is a real experience, what if our bodies do actually physically float or fall when we sleep? Logical appeals to his professional colleagues fail, he's branded as a nut and a potential embarrassment to the profession, so to get his phenomena

investigated he changes tack, taking to floating select public appearances, and then denying that he has done any such thing, as a means of motivating his observers to investigate, as each feels 'either I'm going insane or that guy can really levitate'.

This counter intuitive approach proving to be a more effective stimulus to investigation than his earlier open and formal claims, which only resulted in the diagnosis that he was insane.

An interesting train of logic to ride?

Breeds there a man ...? - Features a man who is fearful of his suicidal tendencies and who approaches the Authorities wanting to be jailed or similarly incarcerated for his own self protection. He is a Scientist who is on the verge of a world changing discovery, a way to the Stars. He is of the belief that the human race is watched over by long lived others who regard human civilisation as an experiment, an experiment that sees entire societies programmed to self destruct instead of continuously proceeding to a next higher level. Most humans have this 'distraction/destruction' gene, particularly those of an innovative nature, several colleagues in the field have 'passed on' with unfinished work, but not so strongly in the case of this bloke, as he manages to achieve his scientific breakthrough before he commits suicide.

The C-Chute – The perennial problem, after a brief space battle, what to do when your space passenger ship is taken over by aliens and you face years of incarceration until the diplomats resolve the Alien / Human war by diplomatic means. Resistance may not be futile, but who among the captives is prepared to die as a hero? A drama of personalities as much

as a minor battle between the stars. The deal is, suit up, exit through the C-Chute (for deceased bodies and trash) pass through open space, re-enter the Space Ship through the rocket vents and take the Chlorine breathers by surprise!

All rather contrived, C-Chutes, Chlorine breathers (Oxygen being toxic to them) the ability to enter Space Craft through the Rocket engine bays etc. Asimov's ideas were always better done than his characters, could have been a great and filmable story if written by another Writer?

Conclusion – They were a bit of a 'duty' read at times. I don't think that either of the four stories would be on anyone's 'top ten Asimov stories' list. Asimov's Characterisation in these stories has not improved over time, they may be 'authentic' 1950s characterisation, or what 1950s readers might have expected people of the future to be like, but at times they seem to this reader to be at times both neurotic and or still submerged in a WW2 mentality. That said, there were some good ideas / 'What ifs' at the centre of each story. If the estate of the late ... were to have them re-written / revised, then I believe that each could be a viable movie script, which is after all the hallmark of Twenty First Century Sci-Fi relevance?

Sydney - Thursday May 5, 2011

My usual First Thursday night excursion is to Parramatta, for the monthly Sci-Fi Discussion meeting held at the Infinitas bookshop. The hiatus of this meeting has freed up my calendar slightly and on this occasion I decided to go into town

(Sydney CBD). This journey presented me with three options, to go to the Galaxy bookshop Paranormal Romance meeting, the Star Trek Meet-up group or the 'Skeptics at the pub' meeting. All take place within 100 metres of each other. So I decided to try to spend some time at them all! The following then is my record of the evening;

The Galaxy bookshop Paranormal Romance meeting. Less than ten people were present (down from the usual 15 to 20), but they met surrounded by the shades of books and Authors once beloved?

I usually choose to attend the second Thursday 'overflow' meeting, but on this occasion I wanted to collect a few more surveys towards the 'Paranormal Romance' Green Basenjijis Guide that I'm planning and I was anxious to find out the current news on the re-location of Galaxy.

Galaxy is currently in a 'pre-move' mode, with gaps appearing on shelves, piles of 25% off 'floor specials' to clear stock that may be excess to the shelf space available after the move. 'Big' discounts are due for the approaching Saturday, which lead to discussions about the merits of buy-it-now or hope to find it cheaper on 'Bargain Day', at the risk of missing out as stock contracts.

At the start of this meeting there was an element of 'Last Supper' abroad, as the future of this meeting, post move, is uncertain. The June meetings will not take place in the usual format due to the move. Suggestions were floated to the effect of convening elsewhere for liquid solace. Some present offered to come in and help with the move if this would help to perpetuate the meeting. There was the usual discussion of books bought, and those that were in demand but were

currently out of stock. For 'Dead Reckoning' the latest **Charlaine Harris** Sookie Stack house (# 11!) book, I was able to demonstrate an easy to overlook aspect of the book's design, which features a couple embracing on the front and back of the book in the splash pattern of Claret (blood) against the rest of the yellow cover. **Anne McCaffrey** was mentioned, for having one fairly oblique sex scene in one of her stories, (not sure if it involved human to human, or Human to Dragon, or some sort of a foursome?), and that a collection of all of her 'The Ship who sang ...' stories was out and highly desirable. A story about the inconvenience of having a supernatural flat mate lead to a discussion of flat mate horror stories that left John Birmingham's efforts in the shade. At some point praise was lavished on singularly deserving (but absent) males of the species (not me). A discussion of YA Fantasy (we don't condemn it, we just know of better stuff to read than the highly visible and promoted stuff). Some 'Paranormal Romance / Speculative Fiction is currently finding its way into schools / on Syllabus etc. This lead to a discussion the Flora and Fauna encountered at Schools, as several of those present are school teachers.

Of course, this account leaves out a great deal of substantial 'fannish' discussion that took place, as well as a number of matters that I feel were not intended to be pass beyond those present at the meeting. On this occasion I took no notes, so the above consists entirely of 'the day after' recollections. If this meeting is 'Cactus' then I for one will miss the opportunity of being exposed to a different sort of SF fandom to what I encounter at other Sydney SF&F meetings.

The Star Trek Meet-up group

They meet in a café at the top of the Queen Victoria Building. I showed up after 8 pm, 'Last orders please' said the wait person and I guess most of the 'regulars' had already left (A Star Trek Meet-up on the night when they show STNG and Star Gate Atlantis on HD TV surely not such a good idea Ian?). Had a chat to **Ian McLean**, discussed the 2011 Blue Mountains Freecon etc. Now that he understands the concept, Ian is enthusiastic about attending future Freecons. There is some overlap between this group and the First Friday Dr Who meeting at Newtown.

Final meeting for the night, the '**Skeptics at the pub**' meeting at the Coronation Hotel 5-7 Park Street (between the 412 and 423 bus stops).

As I came in, **Tim Mendham** (Editor of the Skeptic Journal) was leaving. For this meeting I did take a few 'point' notes, enough to cover a large postcard?

Who was there? When I arrived there were still nearly thirty people present, seated in groups of four to six around a number of tables in the 'mezzanine' restaurant. About two thirds of those present were men, only three with beards, including myself, defying the usual MIB paradigm about Skeptics, that they are all 'Men-In-Beards'.

At each table there was active conversation, at the table I was seated at the conversation moved between several topics

In essence, this event, or the part of it I was present for, proved to be a meet-up for discussion rather than a meeting with a topic or an agenda.

There was some discussion about Nukes and Alternative Energy, mainly focussed on the practicalities of round the clock and whole of the economy energy needs.

We discussed our disappointments at the placement of Homeopathic 'placebo' medicines in Pharmacies. A giveaway for Homeopathic medicines is frequently an eye catching claim on the packaging to the effect of 'No side effects' indicating that the preparation actually contains no active ingredients! Further discussion of this lead to disclosure of a method of enhancing the placebo effect, i.e. the Chocolate Aided Placebo effect, where you ask, 'Do you think the hurt will go away if I give you a chocolate?'

Other ways of dealing with discomfort or mood enhancement (where Chocolate fails?), a good Bike ride can release 'feel good' Endorphins, and similarly the (ouch!) extended process of receiving 'Skin Illustrations', releases a similar flood of Tattoo Endorphins! The Science literate (and those fearing Alien abduction?) may have the pulsar locations diagram from the Voyager plaque tattooed on their back, as a form of cosmic, 'please return to ...' message.

Our bike rider had her satchel decorated with an enormous number of Buttons (Badges), each the fossils of movements, moments and encounters on life's great bike journey?

Technology on a stick? - The woman at my table had an extraordinary assembly of technology on a steel bar, which I discovered was the handle bar of her bike. All the sorts of things you might want on a car dashboard. An eminently sensible move for Sydney and environs, all that removable high value kit safely at hand while her bike was chained up outside and in full public view.

I was tempted to go into Woolworths Town Hall for the usual 'in-Sydney' shopping. It's a Woolworths (Groceries) and a Big W

(Home Wares etc), but decided to check out the bus situation first. In this I was fortunate, as it was only a few minutes wait until the next 412 bus was due. Standing at the bus stop I had a look at some of the 'vivid' festival's handiwork. The Town hall building was decorated with parrot projected on it. Why on Earth? What an amazing idea, throw some lights on some buildings, a slide show on public buildings to make them (briefly) seem more interesting and attention holding. The best I can say for the experience is that at least they had to drop the light pollution nearby for their 'Art' to be visible. It was noticeably darker on George Street, unfortunately it was overcast or some stars might have been visible. The 'decoration' made it difficult to read the time off the face of the Town Hall clock, and really, *Big Deal* in a city saturated with in attention seeking, well lit up Advertising billboards it's just a change of emphasis not an innovation.

I was able to sit and read more of 'Dead Reckoning' on the bus, and I meditated on the formulae of this series, a beginning with sitrep from last episode, a minor threat emerges, is resolved, a new piece of information/social situation change, learn new facts about main character's back story, a growing new threat, a process of escalating violence, a conclusive set piece confrontation, a change or other emotional revelation (and acceptance), the near complete resolution of the book's issue, new minor characters enter the story ready to be featured in greater detail in future book/s.

This is book 11, with presumably a lot more to come, no doubt encouraged by HBO script funding etc. Home by about 10.30 pm.

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2011

The 2011 Blue Mountains Freecon (BMF), held at Gearins Hotel Katoomba on Saturday June 25, 2011, from 10.30 to 6 pm.

I believe that the 2011 BMF it was a success, with nearly thirty people participating, in spite of several major handicaps. In the final fortnight I learned that the venue was to be sold at Auction two days ahead of the Freecon, hence Jack Thompson was very unlikely to attend, and just a few days before the Freecon, insufficient time to move the BMF to another weekend, I learned that to get to Katoomba from Sydney you would need to get a bus from Central or Penrith before you could catch a Blue Mountains service train. A three or four hour trip each way, it would have been quicker to have gone to Canberra!

Despite this, over two dozen people managed to make it to Katoomba to take part, including several local new faces. The reduced numbers allowed for a greater degree of informality than previously and the 2011 BMF was in effect a series of conversations about SF&F involving all present, rather than a presenters addressing an audience.

Another consequence of the greatly reduced participation of the usual Freecon attending Sydney residents, was that it made for a very much more 'local' BMF than last year, also, most of the 'non-local' members were from outer Sydney. Clearly, by popular acclaim the '**Book of the Freecon**' this year was **Bill Congreve's** new collection, 'Souls along the Meridian'. As 'Ghosts of honour we discussed **Edward F Russell** (original 1939 Sydney Futurian, **Mick Ousley**, and

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the Writers **Joanna Russ, Maria Quinn** and **Dianne Wynne Jones**.

The First Five Green Basenjjs Guides, covering **Sydney SF&F meetings, Australian Crime Fiction, The SMSA Crime Mystery Readers meetings, Sydney's Single Author Literary Societies** and **Paranormal Romance / Urban Fantasy**.

After the Freecon, a very productive meeting was held to discuss starting a Blue Mountains SF&F group, and what form it might take. This meeting took place in room 10, the Jack Thompson memorial suite. A report on this meeting will be available shortly, after consultation with 2011 BMF members.

Conclusion - Under very challenging circumstances the 2011 BMF succeeded as an enjoyable event and a repetition during 2012 seems reasonable. However, as Easter 2012 marks the 60th anniversary of Australia's first ever SF convention, the 1952 '**Sydcon**', the 2012 BMF might have to be to be at the end of 2012 rather than during May/June. Also, it is possible that a 2012 BMF may be located 'down the line' from Katoomba, closer to Parramatta and Penrith, as most locals attending this year had to go 'up the line' to Katoomba, and none came down the line from further out.

If you want to support this event or future Sydney Freecons materially, you could send me a \$5 or \$10 note or ten \$0.60 cent stamps by post to the PO box below and I'll post the first twenty the 'con bag' (containing all five Green Basenjjs Guides!) and a copy of the con report when I get round to finishing it.

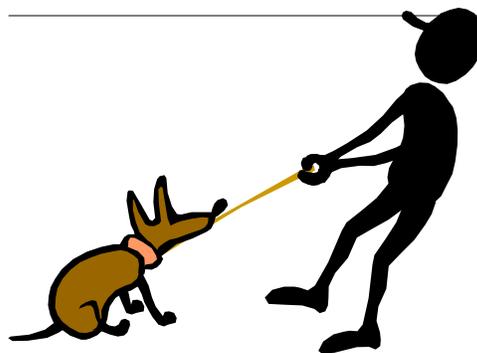
If you are interested in joining a Blue Mountains SF&F group or in being notified about a 2012 Blue Mountains Freecon,

please contact Garry at Futurian@sydneyfuturian.org OR Local PO Box 4152, BEXLEY NORTH NSW 2207. I've got 2012 BMF registration forms available.

Wishing you well in all things. - GPD

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They now seem more able and more motivated to rise up on their hind legs when offered treats. Amber is looking good, she has regained a waist and Rusty shows more spare skin, less of a potbelly and has regained the loose and 'unfilled out dog' look that he had when we first got him. On the down side, Rusty has been destroying our clothing, pyjamas, underwear etc. I'm not sure if this is out of spite, boredom or simply curiosity now that Sun is setting at closer to 4 pm than 9 pm. My feeling is that a number of the ingredients to the soaps, lotions and potions, that find their way onto our clothes taste good to Rusty, a dog with very peculiar and catholic tastes, who prefers his drinking water with soap scum or 'green' stagnant rainwater to fresh tap water. On the other hand, a wintery afternoon, having a 15 kg. 40 degree 'hot water bottle' snuggled up next to your feet can be quite comforting!



Given the opportune discovery that the Campsie Big W store both stocks 12 kg bags of Supercoat Lite and Mature (The dog food endorsed by **Harry Potter**) and does home deliveries for about the cost of a Taxi ride home. I've begun an every Eighty Days ritual of ordering 24 kg of dog food to be home delivered. This is infinitely preferable, and works out to be no greater cost than a bus trip to and from a supermarket to carry home an 8 kg bag, which is a bit of a strain. The Arrival of two 12kg bags requires a response. I fill 16 three litre milk bottles with 1500 grams each. These bottles are a five day ration. I am able to stack them on shelves / in a 60 litre bin with wheels. They are accessible when needed and convenient quantities to handle. Past experience has shown that just stacking the bags in the garage is an open invitation and a 'Free Lunch' to mice. For Amber and Rusty the daily ration is a precisely measured 300 grams. I have about a week's worth of these daily rations in plastic jars near the dog bowl (only one, as Amber is dominant so they do take turns eating) and three or four times during the day some dog food is added to the bowl. Part of the reason why I do this has to do with mother, in the past she has neglected to fill the bowl and at other times filled it to the brim (a kilo of dog food a day?) so that there is food left in it overnight or scattered nearby, a gift for Mice and Cockroaches. With the day's allocation on display, with the amount left of the allocation clearly visible. Under this regime Amber has re-developed a waist and Rusty has dropped a few Kilos. They also get whatever is deemed to be 'unfit for human consumption', so they are in no danger of fading away anytime soon.

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